

Approved w/ Line Creek
RNA DA/Fonsi 6/29/00.

Forest Plan Amendment Number 34
Custer National Forest
Billings, Montana

The Custer National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan is amended as follows:

The Line Creek Plateau Research Natural Area comprises 19,369 acres on the Custer National Forest in addition to 3,053 acres on the adjacent Shoshone National Forest. In the table in Forest Plan Amendment Number 18, the status of Line Creek Plateau is changed from "Candidate RNA" to "Established RNA." The acreage is changed from "undetermined" to 19,369 acres, with the following footnote:

Of this acreage, approximately 392 acres are within Management Area H (Recommended Wilderness), approximately 1,321 acres are within Management Area I (Designated Wilderness), and approximately 17,656 acres are within Management Area L (Research Natural Areas). For the portion of the RNA within Management Area H, the Forest Plan goals and management standards for both Management Areas H and L apply. For the portion of the RNA within Management Area I, the Forest Plan goals and management standards for both Management Areas I and L apply.

The Forest Plan map of management areas is modified to reflect the establishment of this RNA as a Management Area L (for the portion outside of Management Areas H and I), as shown on the map in the establishment record and attached to this amendment.

Designation of the Line Creek Plateau RNA is supported by an establishment record and an environmental assessment. A decision to designate the RNA and amend the Forest Plan has been issued. The Decision Notice contains a Finding of No Significant Impact, and a finding that this is not a significant amendment to the Forest Plan.

The following sections of the goals and management standards for Management Area L pertain to Line Creek Plateau RNA only.

B. Goals

The goal of this Management Area is to provide an opportunity for research, study, observation, monitoring, and those educational activities that maintain the natural conditions for which the RNA was established.

Standards for protection and management of a RNA must support and promote the basic objectives and purposes for which the RNA is established. Make sure that the establishment record specifically states the objectives for establishing the area.

The prime consideration in managing research natural areas is maintenance of natural conditions and processes.

C. Management Standards

1. Recreation and Lands

a. Recreation use is not prohibited, but will not be encouraged. However, recreational use can be prohibited or restricted by special orders if such use threatens or interferes with the objectives or purposes for which the research natural area is established.

b. Within Line Creek RNA the following restrictions will be implemented: Low impact mountain biking is allowed only on system trails. Low impact hiking and horse use is allowed. Hitching, tethering, or picketing horses or other livestock within 200 feet of a stream or other free flowing water is prohibited. Low impact camping (including building a fire, other than fires confined to liquid fuel stoves) is allowed except within 200 feet of any

lakeshore or 100 feet of any live stream or free flowing water is prohibited. Motorized use, including snowmobiles will not be allowed except Twin Lakes Basin (Shoshone NF) will remain open to snowmobiles (as delineated in Appendix D-Alternative 5 of the EA). Snowmobiles are still allowed within the Highway 212, 250 foot centerline easement.

c. Activities in RNAs will usually be limited to non-manipulative or approved research, observation, and study. If vegetation manipulation is needed to establish or maintain vegetative communities and processes, required actions need to be specified in Forest Plan, Establishment Record, RNA Management Plan or pertinent National Environmental Planning Act Decision Document.

d. Encourage and permit the use of research natural areas by responsible scientists and educators (Educational use will generally be at the college upper class or graduate level). Do not authorize educational or research use of a research natural area if it is probable that such use will cause unacceptable impact on the values for which the RNA was established. All proposals for research by non-Forest Service scientists in RNAs must be approved by the Station Director. Permission to use RNAs for research, monitoring, or administrative studies is authorized and approved by the District Ranger, and shall conform to conditions specified in approved study plans and/or cooperative agreements. For research in wilderness areas, see FSM 2323.

e. Where special orders are needed to limit, restrict, or control specific activities such as camping, seasons of use, or other uses, that are not compatible with the objectives of the RNA, the Forest Supervisor shall issue orders pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261, Subpart B, to protect an area's features. Any such orders shall incorporate the special closure provisions of 36 CFR 261.53.

f. Evaluation of areas that appear suitable for classification will be evaluated using the analysis and documentation required by the Forest Service. RNA reports will continue to be prepared and submitted for approval or rejection.

g. Proposed and candidate RNAs will be managed as Research Natural Areas until classified. If proposed and candidate RNAs are not classified the Forest Plan will be amended to assign them to another Management Area.

h. Trails will not be constructed within these areas. Existing system trails may be maintained. Reconstruction will be allowed for public safety and/or protection of soil and water resources.

i. Special use occupancy which requires constructed facilities or range improvement construction will not be permitted.

j. Visual Quality Objective will be Retention.

k. It may be necessary to monument all corners or turning points and document and record the monumentation in the field when appropriate to ensure integrity of the area.

2. Wildlife & Fish

Wildlife habitat improvement projects will not be permitted in this area, except to meet the needs of approved research projects associated with the management of the Research Natural Area. Fish stocking will be allowed to continue in lakes stocked prior to RNA designation.

3. Range

No permitted domestic livestock grazing. Incidental recreational livestock use is allowed as long as it does not threaten or interfere with the objectives or purposes for which the RNA is established. Management practices may be authorized which are necessary for noxious weed control or to manage or restore the vegetation for which the RNA was created. These practices may include grazing, control of excessive animal populations, mowing, fiber removal, removal of exotic plants, or prescribed burning. Where management activities are prescribed, they shall be as specific as possible against target organisms and induce minimal impact to other components of the ecosystem. Only certified weed seed free forage will be allowed within the RNA.

4. Timber

Prohibit any logging activity and firewood cutting..

5. Watershed, Air Quality, Riparian

Natural ecological processes will be permitted to continue. Specific forms of manipulation may be needed in order to restore or maintain ecological processes.

6. Minerals & Geology

- a. Geophysical operations will be required to use minimal impacts techniques. If unacceptable surface disturbance is expected, the activity will be prohibited.
- b. When application is made to lease, or existing leases expire or terminate, a No Surface Occupancy stipulation will be applied to the new lease on lands which are administratively available for lease.
- c. When application is made to lease, or existing leases expire or terminate, a No Surface Occupancy stipulation will be applied to the new lease on lands which are administratively available for lease.
- d. Where applicable or deemed necessary, the area will be withdrawn from mineral entry under the General Mining Law of 1872.
- e. Permits will not be issued for the removal of mineral material.

7. Lands

- a. Special uses will not be permitted except those that may be associated with study of the Research Natural Area. Exception includes the existing special use outfitter/guide permit (Custer NF) and the periodic over the snow access for servicing the base facility of the Ski Camp special use permit (Shoshone NF). These uses are allowed to continue. Upon expiration or transfer of permit(s), encourage permitted use in a different area if available.

8. Facilities

- a. Roads and other facilities will not be constructed in these areas.
- b. Existing public roads may be retained (Highway 212, which bisects Line Creek Plateau RNA). Reconstruction will be allowed for public safety and protection of the soil and water resource. Executive Order 5949 (November 1932) established a state easement on Highway 212 which extends 250 feet from either side of centerline and is excluded from the RNA. Staging areas for materials stockpiles and equipment will continue to occur within the easement limits for future highway maintenance projects both within Montana and Wyoming (within the Shoshone National Forest).
- c. Energy/utility corridors will be avoided in this area.
- d. Fencing will be permitted if needed to protect the area. Do not permit new roads, trails, fences, structures, or signs on an established RNA unless they contribute to the objectives or to the protection of the area.

9. Fire Management

- a. Wildfire Management
 - 1) The control objective will be dependent upon the values at risk.

2) The appropriate suppression responses will be contain and control. The response of confine will be appropriate on the National Forest Districts only.

b. Prescribed Fire

Planned ignitions will not normally be used as a management tool. Possible exceptions could be debris disposal.

Unplanned ignitions may be used on National Forest Districts as a management tool to support the objectives of maintaining natural ecosystems. Unplanned ignitions will be allowed under an approved Prescribed Natural Fire Program. This will include allowing natural fires to burn only within a prescription designed to accomplish objectives of the RNA. Minimum fire suppression techniques would be allowed. Seeding of non-native species after fires is discouraged.

10. Other Protection

No actions against endemic insects, diseases, wild plants, or animals will be allowed unless deemed that such action is necessary to protect the features for which the RNA was established or to protect adjacent resources.

- End Amendment Number 34 -